

February 13, 2009 - Murtha: House Passes the Economic Stimulus Conference Report

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- Congressman John P. Murtha, Chairman of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense, announced today that the U.S. House of Representatives has passed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. This legislation, agreed to by both House and Senate conferees, provides \$787 billion in combined spending and tax relief necessary to boost the American economy. Murtha voted in favor of this stimulus package, and it passed the House 246-183.

"Over 3.6 million Americans have lost their jobs since the start of this recession," commented Murtha. "Failure to act and to prevent further economic decline would not only be irresponsible but disastrous for American families. Congress acted today by passing an economic stimulus package that will create millions of new jobs, help American families, and make critical investments in our nation's infrastructure, education, health care system, science technology, and energy usage."

"Some have argued that a \$787 billion investment in the American economic and American families is too costly. It's unfortunate they didn't feel the same way about the \$864 billion the Bush Administration spent on the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the costs of which have contributed to the current economic crisis."

Within Murtha's Subcommittee's jurisdiction, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Plan includes \$4.2 billion to repair and modernize Department of Defense facilities and to invest in facility energy efficiency projects, of which \$400 million will be used to improve military medical facilities and \$153 million will be used to restore Army barracks. The Department of Defense is the single largest consumer of energy in the world, and in addition to the funds to make facilities more energy efficient, there is also \$300 million for research into renewable and alternative energy sources. The Defense title also includes \$15 million for the Department of Defense Inspector General to ensure vigorous oversight of implementation of these projects.

Among the spending highlights of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act:

- \$27.5 billion for highway construction;
- \$8.4 billion for investments in public transportation;
- \$9.3 billion for investments in rail transportation, including Amtrak, High

Speed and Intercity Rail;

- \$7.2 billion for Broadband to increase access

and usage in underserved areas;

- \$1.2 billion for VA hospital and medical facility construction and improvements;
- \$1 billion for the Community Development Block Grant program;
- \$6 billion for local clean and drinking water infrastructure improvements;
- \$19 billion to ensure widespread adoption and use of interoperable health

information technology;

- \$53.6 billion for the State Fiscal Stabilization Fund, including \$39.5 billion to

local school districts using existing funding formulas, which can be used for

preventing cutbacks, preventing layoffs, school modernization, or other

purposes; \$5 billion to states as bonus grants for meeting key performance

measures in education; and \$8.8 billion to states for high priority needs such as

public safety and other critical services, which may include education and for

modernization, renovation and repairs of public school facilities and institutions

of higher education facilities;

- \$15.6 billion to increase the maximum Pell Grant by \$500, helping 7 million

students;

- \$19.9 billion for additional Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP);

- Continues through December 2009 the extended unemployment benefits

program (which provides up to 33 weeks of extended benefits) that is otherwise

scheduled to begin to phase out at the end of March 2009 – thereby helping an

additional 3.5 million jobless workers;

- Increases unemployment benefits for 20 million jobless workers by \$25 per week.

Among the tax-relief highlights of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act:

- Provides direct tax relief to 95 percent of American workers through the Making

Work Pay Tax Cut, a refundable tax credit of up to \$400 per worker;

- Provides a tax credit for families that purchase plug-in hybrid vehicles of up to

\$7,500 to spur the next generation of American cars;

- Helps more than 4 million additional students attend college with a new,

partially refundable \$2,500 tax credit for families;

- Protects 26 million middle-class families from being hit by the AMT;

- Helps businesses quickly recover costs of new capital investments by extending

the bonus depreciation and increased small business expensing for businesses

making investments in plants and equipment in 2009;

- Includes a variety of provisions to help small business, including small business

expensing for investment in new plants and equipment, loss carry back for small

businesses, a delay of the 3% withholding tax on payments to businesses that sell

goods or services to governments, and a cut in the capital gains tax cut for

investors in small businesses who hold stock for more than five years.

Murtha also noted that the legislation includes \$2 billion for the Army Corps of Engineers Construction account. Pittsburgh, the second busiest inland port in the United States, ships over 43 million tons of river cargo every year through a system of 23 locks and dams. Currently, the Army Corps is working on a \$1.5 billion multi-year project to upgrade/replace Locks and Dams 2, 3, and 4 on the lower Monongahela River. Murtha has been instrumental in securing \$488 million for this project to date.

"Our region's vast network of locks and dams support 218,000 direct and indirect jobs," said Murtha. "I hope that a significant portion of the \$2 billion set aside in the American Recovery and

Reinvestment Plan goes toward advancing the Lower Monongahela River Project, which is so essential for commerce, recreation, and in attracting future economic growth.”

For further details of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Plan of 2009:

<http://appropriations.house.gov/pdf/PressSummary02-12-09.pdf>

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